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Assembly
California Legislature
VIRGINIA STROM-MARTIN
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FIRST DISTRICT



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WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

September 4, 2002

Senator Dede Alpert
Chair, Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education
1020 N Street, Suite 560
Sacramento, CA 95819

Dear Senator Alpert:

I am writing to express my concerns with Recommendations 29 and 30 of the Master Plan for Education. While I agree that the Department of Education's role and responsibilities should be clearly defined, as well as that of the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Office of the Secretary for Education (OSE), I do not agree with redefining the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (SPI) role as one of overseer of accountability (non-fiscal).

The electorate has made it abundantly clear that they prefer an elected representative whose exclusive focus is education. The tension that presently exists between the SPI and the administration has evolved from recently expanding the scope of the OSE. If we give the Administration even more authority (i.e. the management of the K-12 system via the appointment of a cabinet-level Chief Education Officer serving as the Director of the Department of Education), we will have achieved a mega-authority system residing with the Governor and her/his appointees.

If the elected Superintendent is reduced to monitoring and managing an accountability system he or she did not create, then the office becomes similar to the legislature's and serves a comparable function. However, the Superintendent would have no authority to implement change, unlike that of the legislature.

I strongly suggest that we keep the Superintendent's role as is, reign in the overlap with the OSE and provide for legislative appointees to the SBE by the Speaker and the President Pro Tem of the Senate. In addition, I would create criteria for the appointees based on geographical representation, ethnicity, gender and occupation for a more balanced Board reflective of our state's diversity. In this way we do not necessarily eliminate tension amongst the various governance entities, but we cast a wider net of influence within the scope of decision-making.

Sincerely,

Virginia Strom-Martin
Assemblymember, 1st District

